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Tim W Hayes 03/05/2007 04:03:32 PM From DB/Inbox: Tim W Hayes

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 00479

SIPDIS
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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1186
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2149
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0132

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000479

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR ISN, IO, AND NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2017
TAGS: [KNNP](#) [ENRG](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MOTTAKI'S VISIT TO TURKEY

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkish officials say they pressed Mottaki to make Iran's nuclear program more transparent and to carefully consider diplomatic offers already on the table, including the P5 1. The Turks cautioned that the international community's lack of confidence about Iran's nuclear program was growing, and that it was high time and within their power to resolve the issue diplomatically. Mottaki reportedly repeated arguments that Iran's nuclear program was peaceful and complained that Iran's message was not being understood by the West. MFA officials claim the Joint Economic commission co-chaired by Mottaki achieved little, including on long-standing bilateral energy issues. End summary

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION

¶2. (C) In a readout of Mottaki's February 19-21 visit to Ankara, MFA officials lead by Hakan Kivanc, Head of the Economic Relations Department, told us the Iranian Foreign Minister came primarily in his capacity as co-chair of the bilateral Turkey-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC). The Commission's 19th meeting was judged a failure by the MFA, who told us that Turkey did not achieve any progress toward decreasing its 4.5 billion dollar trade deficit with Iran. Although Mottaki trumpeted energy agreements, including transit of Turkmen gas to Europe and Turkish exploration rights in Iran, the MFA said that nothing was signed. They told us that energy issues were only addressed in a side meeting with the Energy Minister and did not figure in the JEC.

¶3. (C) MFA officials said that the two sides signed a four-page document (versus ten pages at their last meeting in 2004). They said the document was almost entirely commitments to pursue future actions in increase bilateral trade and investment: getting Iran to ratify the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) trade agreement, removing obstacles to trade and transportation links, holding trade fairs, etc. Two Turkish companies are still waiting for promised Iranian reimbursement -- Tepe Akfen (TAV) for the Iranian expropriation of its airport project and Turkcell for the cancellation of its cell phone contract.

NUCLEAR PROGRAM

¶4. (C) On the margins of the JEC, Mottaki had separate meetings with President Sezer, Prime Minister Erdogan, Foreign Minister Gul, and Energy Minister Guler. Turkish officials told us that these meetings were arranged at Mottaki's request and there was "frank" discussion of Iran's nuclear program. They say they underlined Turkey's concerns and those of the international community, and encouraged Iran to take more transparent, positive actions. They reportedly emphasized that UNSCR 1196 and 1737 were "warning shots" Iran should heed and told Mottaki that it was "high time" and within the GOI's power to resolve the nuclear issue through diplomatic means. The Turks urged Mottaki to carefully consider offers already on the table, specifically the P5 1. The international community's lack of confidence was growing, and Iran should comply fully and promptly with all IAEA requests.

¶5. (C) Mottaki's reply on the nuclear issue was reportedly very short. He repeated the argument that Iran's nuclear program was a peaceful one, and complained that this point is not understood in the West. According to MFA, he said that Iran would be prepared to negotiate if its case were referred back to the IAEA. He reportedly told Sezer that Iran was ready to open its nuclear program to an international consortium made up of interested governments and private companies, and asked Turkey to join this effort. President Sezer was reportedly unresponsive to this request.

IRAQ AND LEBANON

¶6. (C) MFA officers said Iraq and Lebanon were also discussed. On Iraq, the Turks said they emphasized the high risks posed by increasing sectarian violence and urged Iran to play a more constructive role in that country and to respect the national unity, territorial integrity and the current government of Iraq. On Lebanon, the Turks stated that Mottaki downplayed Iranian influence on Hezbollah, claiming that Iran does not make decisions on Hezbollah's behalf.

¶7. (C) Comment: MFA officials underscored the GOT's efforts to reinforce the international community's message on Iran's nuclear program. They told us the Iranians decided, at the last minute, to switch their head of delegation for the JEC from the transportation minister to the foreign minister. In response, the Turks deliberately kept State Minister for Foreign Trade Kursad Tuzmen as head of their JEC delegation. Protocol and posturing aside, the visit is a good indicator of Turkey's continuing balancing act with its Iranian neighbor.

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WILSON